View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Meyer, Caspar (2017) Foucault's clay feet: Ancient Greek vases in modern theories of sex. History Workshop Journal 85 (1), pp. 143-168. ISSN 1363-3554.

Downloaded from: http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/20647/

Usage Guidelines:
Please refer to usage guidelines at http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html or alternatively contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

Foucault's Clay Feet: Ancient Greek Vases in Modern Theories of Sex

by Caspar Meyer

Birkbeck University of London *h.meyer@bbk.ac.uk*

Every now and then specialists of ancient Greek vase-painting need reminding how strange the objects they study really are. Figured painting, to modern eyes, almost always presupposes either a flat surface, such as a framed canvas or a page in a book, or repetitive compositions, if the painting is applied as an ornament on an object. Greek vases combine a seemingly infinite variety of images with an equally variable range of pottery shapes, relating to eating, drinking, storage and domestic production. Neither flat nor repetitive, the objects defy modern categorizations of 'art' and 'ornament'. No wonder that ever since their first discovery in the ancient necropoleis of Italy, the contrast between the pictorial sophistication of the decoration and the mundaneness of its medium has generated disagreements about how Greek painted vases should be evaluated. Where early modern antiquarians were primarily interested in the technology and ritual implications of the vessels themselves, eighteenth-century aesthetes saw their figural decoration as fine art that just happened to have been applied to a ceramic shape. A persistent feature in settling these debates was the preference for invoking external evidence, usually from the textual tradition of antiquity. In iconographical study, for instance, which remains one of the dominant modes of approaching the material, texts are adduced to identify mythological subjects in the decoration. In a related manner, archaeologists rely on stylistic seriations of excavated pottery to connect individual deposits and cultural layers in the stratigraphy of sites with historical events mentioned in the sources, most often foundations and destructions of cities.

The interest of such text-based approaches is limited if they are employed, as is often the case, to confirm facts already known from the sources. We already know from Homer that Athena carried an aegis (an animal skin bearing the beheaded Gorgon's face for protection), and we already know from Herodotus (or have little reason to doubt his claim) that the Persians destroyed Athens's public monuments when they sacked the city in 480 BC. If text-derived explanations are at best a starting-point for other forms of enquiry, their usefulness breaks down in discussions of subjects that bear little or no direct relationship to surviving texts, which is often the case in Greek vase-painting. The imagery on Greek vases

encompasses an extraordinary range of subjects which reveal no easy match with known myth or history, among them many scenes of figures engaging in sexual activities. How can such 'vernacular' representations produce reliable descriptions of ancient life, especially if they show acts of a kind only alluded to in the sources?

The relevance of Greek vases to the study of sexuality goes much further than the mere coincidence of subjects. The study of sexuality and Greek vases alike has all too often been conducted in a conceptual vacuum that excludes bodies from the sphere of verbal explanation. In the example of Greek pottery the images of the painted decoration have come to be studied as a visual discourse analogous to the elite discourses familiar from ancient texts, rather than as the embodied practices of those who once used the objects. Studies of sexuality purport to speak about the sexual feelings of individuals, but seek to rationalize those feelings in an analytical domain of structures and relationships which those engaging in sex cannot consciously be aware of.

I venture to say that Michel Foucault, the thinker who did more than any other to define this term's modern usage, would have agreed that 'sexuality' is a profoundly strange concept. Foucault was suspicious of intellectuals who claimed to speak in the name of truth and justice for others. He rejected universal systems of morality, however noble their goals, in favour of examining specific problems and the answers given by those facing them. His commitment to actor-centred historiography is brought out in his distinction between 'polemics' and 'problematizations': that is, between answers to political issues formulated on the basis of pre-existing theories or doctrines and those that take as their starting-point the challenges through which individuals experience their existence as social beings.[1] And yet, when Foucault wrote about sexuality many of his readers were left wondering how far the discourses of sexuality which he identified so masterfully in different historical contexts actually corresponded with individuals' experiences in the given place and time. When are his (or any other) discussions of sexuality also about sex, and when are they not?

Past commentators have considered the ambiguous scope of his statements about sexuality to be an outcome of the methodological shifts in his oeuvre from what he called 'archaeologies' to 'genealogies', and back again. Foucauldian discourse analysis, as has often been pointed out, went through different stages, from the more structuralist and text-bound archaeologies of his earlier writings to the later genealogies concerned with the embodiment of discourse in social power.[2] While his genealogical approach tried to extend his analytical categories to practices beyond the world of texts and linguistic expression, it received only one comprehensive treatment, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and remained more a

repertoire of strategic choices than a coherent theory.[3] Furthermore, his late work on ancient sexuality presents a marked return to his archaeological mode of exploring the structures of discourses without much focus on their correlation with power and practice.

This reversal in his method may reflect the unfinished state of his multi-volume history of sexuality, as is often surmised. But in this article, I argue that the flight from the realm of bodies and objects originates far more in the traditional embarrassment about materiality in academic historiography. The embarrassment about 'things' in this specific instance manifests itself in the implicit manner in which evidence from Greek painted vases has been subordinated to the demands of verbal explanation.

FROM THINGS TO WORDS

As is well-known, Greek antiquity provided in the second volume (1984, transl. 1985) of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* the critical case of otherness with which to substantiate his broader claims, set out in volume one (1976, transl. 1978), that the modern habit of identifying individuals with a sexual type rests on specific styles of psychiatric reasoning which had crystallized in the nineteenth century. The Greeks were able to act as a starting-point for his genealogical exploration of modern practices because their experience of the self as a desiring subject was apparently structured around discourses of status rather than gender. In contrast to modern norms, the distinction between hetero- and homo-sexual inclinations was, according to Foucault, not subject to consistent approbation or condemnation, as long as the preferred act of sexual satisfaction was not perceived to jeopardize the obligatory masculine ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency in civic and economic affairs. To put it plainly, a freeborn citizen was free to gratify his sexual appetites with whomever he wished, as long as gratification required neither him nor a fellow citizen to assume a submissive position, by being penetrated.

Although the plentiful scholarship on ancient sexuality published in the wake of Foucault's books makes frequent reference to Greek vases, the dependence of his argument on this material has not yet been considered. Given that Foucault apparently never saw the need to concern himself with the problems which such evidence poses, the proverbial clay feet that I am trying to expose may be seen as one of those digressions which already abound in critiques of his work. After all, Foucault has often been censured for failing to address aspects of ancient sexual practice which are not, in fact, strictly within the purview of his investigation. Feminists have faulted Foucault for excluding women as sexual subjects from his discussion, even though the classical-period sources (whatever they say about women's

desires) lack the female voices that could generate the genealogical analysis of modern sexuality which Foucault had set out to undertake. Other authors, often designated as 'essentialists' or as feminists or gay rights advocates, criticized Foucault for downplaying the emotional bonds of attraction and love that must have existed in antiquity as in any other period between partners of whatever sex. Such objections seem to disregard Foucault's assertion that the protocols of Greek sexual ethics which he distilled from the works of Greek moralists 'should not lead us to draw hasty conclusions either about the sexual behaviours of the Greeks or about the details of their tastes'.[4] Where Foucault himself had spoken in a nuanced way of internalized dispositions, some commentators were too quick to assume that these dispositions also corresponded to external power relations. Both lines of critique run the risk of mistaking Foucault's specific argument about the discursive basis of sexuality for a general argument about the cultural basis of sexual attraction or the sexual proclivities of the Greeks.[5]

The title of his book is arguably misleading; but what editor in their right mind would have permitted the more accurate 'historical enquiry into the slowly emerging discursive practices, and its attendant systems of power and regulative forms of scientific reasoning, which correlate to the modern habit of identifying oneself as having a particular sexual identity, also known as sexuality'?[6] While there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the book we may wish Foucault had written and the book he wanted to write, we also need to concede that some aspects of his work on Greek sexuality undermine the coherence of his own project. Foremost among these is the symbolic correspondence which he posited in his Greek ethics of desire between political hegemony and phallic domination, as penetrator. Whereas previous critics have focused on the emotional reduction which his active–passive model implies – presenting Greek sex as a 'zero-sum game' – I am much more concerned by the suggestion that the historical 'reality' of Greek sexual practice *does* matter to his genealogy of discourses. Even the slightest suggestion to this effect threatens to transform his investigation into an unstable hybrid, concentrating neither on the discursive construction of desire nor on the complete structure of Greek gender relations. If we contemplate the consistency of his presentation rather than the substance of his argument, then many of the objections which his work has attracted among feminists and essentialists are justified.

Yet in recognizing the flaws of his account we have come only half-way to realizing the twofold dilemma that led Foucault to undertake his precarious foray into the domain of historical practices. Without his case for the sexual otherness of the Greeks, the overall narrative of his trilogy would have been far less persuasive. At the same time, this case of

otherness, based on the logic of hierarchical 'penetrability', could *only* have been presented with reference to visible practices, since the relevant discursive constraints cannot be recovered from the ancient texts that he used. The rule of penetrability derived instead, as I hope to show, from vase images and from a tradition of transforming objects into words which is inimical to Foucault's political ambitions. His neglect of the vases in effect impedes his intention of highlighting the value of history as a resource in recognizing and surpassing the cultural constraints within which people think and act.

How Foucault arrived at this rule of penetrability has been the source of some debate in recent years.[7] Its origins in Greek literature are not as clear as one would expect them to be from his *History of Sexuality*. Although the literary tradition of the classical era deals with sex frequently and in different types of text, the precise technicalities of genital intercourse remain shrouded in innuendo, to the relief or frustration of many later commentators. Such reticence towards 'unspeakable' deeds is as evident in Athenian comedy as it is in law court speeches and philosophical dialogues, in spite of the marked partiality of Athenian humour for profanities. Anyone who reverts from Foucault to the original sources will be struck by the interpretative leap he accomplished, a leap all the more impressive in view of his acknowledged lack of disciplinary training in the classics. How did he succeed in explaining the Platonic love of the classical tradition in terms of a clear set of rules, essentially about penetration?

The most pointed response to this question comes from James Davidson's 2001 analysis of the links of Foucault's work to that of the late Sir Kenneth Dover, the eminent British classicist best known for his *Greek Homosexuality* (1978).[8] Dover's book had established the key tenet of Foucault's work by arguing that the same-sex relationships that met with approval in ancient Greece involved an older 'lover' (Greek *erastēs*) actively pursuing an adolescent 'beloved' (*erōmenos*), whereas men who continued to assume the role of passive beloved into their maturity were likely to be viewed with suspicion and ridicule. Dover was without doubt the originator of the active–passive dialectic, as Davidson has shown. Foucault acknowledged his debt in a newspaper review of Dover's book as well as numerous references in his history of sexuality.[9] Even so, Davidson's critique misses an important point. Whenever he sets out to show why Dover reduced love to asymmetrical penetration, and why Foucault adopted that same schema, Davidson resorts to vague factors of personal circumstance – homophobia, anti-Semitism, post-war anti-inhibitionism, class anxieties, and 'influences' from psychoanalysis and anthropology. This circumstantial focus risks contaminating his historiographical enquiry with *ad hominem* attacks, as some readers

have noted.[10] Davidson even implies that the validity of the Dover-Foucault interpretation of ancient sex was *a priori* dubious since it was not based on any new discoveries or data.[11]

That claim is admissible only if we discount the numerous vase-paintings which Dover introduced to argue his point. If not exactly new, the evidence from Greek painted pottery was certainly newly discovered at the time, thanks to the rise of classical archaeology as an independent university subject. Dover's was the first generation of British classicists who could be expected to conduct interdisciplinary research in Greek literature and social history, even if they had not been trained in all 'auxiliary' subjects in their student years. In his autobiography Dover describes how he gathered the corpus of sex images on which his study was based by painstakingly leafing through every collection catalogue and illustrated history of vase-painting he could lay his hands on.[12]

In his work the vase-paintings filled a problematic gap in the literary sources between the lyric poetry of the archaic period and the law-court speeches and Socratic dialogues of the fourth century BCE. Whereas the earlier poems offer a glimpse of the kind of praise of handsome boys that was probably customary in symposia – the all-male drinking parties at the centre of Greek political life – the late classical sources provide normative analyses of erotic relationships between freeborn men, strongly disapproving of commercial ones and at least admonitory about those centred on physical attraction.[13] Of course none of these texts details unambiguously what acts any given relationship entailed. To Dover this reticence about *erōs* was always a euphemism for sex whose truth the pots conveniently illustrated.

In his *Greek Homosexuality* references to images are concentrated in the long chapter on the prosecution of Timarchus by Aeschines, which became the key text in building the new consensus on ancient sex.[14] The text is a version of the forensic speech which the Athenian politician Aeschines delivered in 346 BCE, in an attempt to disenfranchise his opponent on account of alleged misconduct in his youth. The proceedings were part of a protracted confrontation among Athenian political factions trying to come to terms with the rise of Macedon as a supra-regional power: the prosecution of Timarchus was a ploy to delay a prosecution which Aeschines himself was facing for alleged collusion with King Philip II of Macedon. Dover argued, in contrast to most previous interpretations, that the decisive misdemeanour which had supposedly impaired Timarchus's capacity for political decision-making was neither the sexual nor the purported commercial nature of his relationships with older men but his predilection for anal submission. Dover based his arguments in part on studiously unabashed explanations of Greek terminology, such as *hybris* ('assault' or 'violence', both physical and moral) and *gynaikeia hamartēmata* ('womanly offences').[15] The

real novelty was, however, the integration into his account of contextual evidence from Greek painted pottery, which was presented in three subsections titled 'Pursuit and Flight' (pp. 81–91), 'Courtship and Copulation' (91–100) and 'Dominant and Subordinated Roles' (100–9).

This division according to subject structures the substance of his discussion. It goes back to a compositional classification of so-called courtship scenes involving male couples established in 1947 by John D. Beazley, the undisputed doyen of Greek vase studies in Britain.[16] Beazley (1885–1970) was Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art at the University of Oxford throughout Dover's time as a student (1938–40) and tutorial fellow (1948–55) at Balliol College. Dover does not appear to have taken any Greek art papers as an undergraduate; but he mentions personal conversations with Beazley in his memoir and seems to have taken an interest in the electronic database of Athenian painted pottery deriving from Beazley's work. By the early 1990s, he noted, the collection of primary data that had taken Dover almost three years to complete could be achieved simply by keying in a search term and producing a print-out of the references needed to track down the vases in museums and publications.[17]

Beazley's classification divided the scenes into three types. In Type A (Fig. 1) the lover and beloved are depicted in what Beazley called the 'up and down' position, with the older *erastēs* kneeling slightly to caress the face of the younger *erōmenos* with one hand, while reaching out to his genitals with the other. In Type B (Fig. 2) the suitor is offering a present to the beloved, commonly in the form of hares, dogs, fighting cocks, musical instruments, flowers, and bags or pouches which are thought to contain knucklebones (game tokens) or money. Type C (Fig. 3) shows lover and beloved in physical contact, facing each other, with the *erastēs* stooping down to rub his erect penis between the *erōmenos*'s thighs.

Dover deduced a general set of behavioural rules from the depicted figures. Beards and beardlessness indicate the age-differential basis of socially accepted homosexuality. The younger beloved is expected to play hard to get, either remaining blasé about the attention he receives, or warding off the suitor's over-zealous advances by clutching his wrist or taking flight. In stark contrast to the sometimes graphic scenes of heterosexual copulation on Athenian pottery, same-sex couples engage in so-called intercrural intercourse rather than anal penetration, and the *erōmenos* has no erection even as the *erastēs* is visibly excited.

This 'grammar' of visualized erotics underpins the rule of gender-blind penetrability which Foucault adopted from Dover: Greek men could congregate with whomever they wanted as long as they remained masters of their desires and their pleasure did not violate the honour of a freeborn equal. Sexual desire for statutory minors confronted Greek ethics with a

domain of intense 'problematization', as Foucault concluded, since freeborn boys were destined to become equal citizens.[18] To resolve this moral tension, the courting of boys had to adhere to a regime of conventions that was conceived to protect the object of desire from dishonour.

In Dover's presentation of the evidence, vase-paintings and literary sources appear to complement each other remarkably well, so much so that Foucault seems to have felt no need to distinguish between the two. The ostensible concurrence between words and images is in my view the foremost reason that the Dover-Foucault interpretation of ancient sex could come to feature as a broad consensus. To some extent, Foucault's indifference to the objects is a function of the conventional habit of rendering the process of investigation invisible in academic writing in order to produce polished explanations, expurgated of the ambiguities which the primary evidence presents. Its results are especially brutal for the vases, which are referred to at one point in his history of sexuality as 'certain iconographic representations'.[19] Foucault's evasiveness is perplexing, given the awareness he displayed elsewhere of how important the evidence from painted pottery had been to Dover. The puzzle which the objects afforded is still palpable in his review of Dover's book, where he stated that: 'The vase paintings are infinitely more explicit than the texts which have survived, including even comedy. But in return, many painted scenes remain silent (and they have indeed remained silent up to this point) without recourse to texts which reveal their value of love'.[20] The feeble dismissal of the objects bears out the tenacity of structuralism in Foucault's thought. For objects to be of any significance to the historian they have to contain symbolic values and oppositions that can be assimilated to texts and 'read' like a text. Objects only exist in so far as they can participate in systems of cultural signification, which are prior to the objects themselves.

THE PROBLEM OF VISUAL TRUTH

On a more fundamental level, the side-lining of materiality in historical writing is not just a rhetorical reflex: it corresponds to a deep-seated tendency which is itself embedded in the practices and instruments of scholarship. In Foucault's case, the downsides of marginalizing Greek vases become clear when we analyse the criticism his history of sexuality has attracted among English-language classicists. This criticism, to be sure, concerns not his treatment of the objects, but the broader implications of his presentation of Greek sexuality as being intrinsically power-driven. The issue is raised with programmatic clarity in the essay collection *Greek Love Reconsidered* (2000), published under the aegis of the North American

Man/Boy Love Association. Its avowed goal, according to the editor Thomas Hubbard, is to rescue Greek pederasty – both as a cultural ideal and as a subject of study – from the distortions of contemporary gender politics and the widespread 'hysteria' about child abuse. Dover's interpretation attracts particular criticism, for it is seen to have assimilated Greek boy love into the mainstream view of age-differential sex as exploitative, more paedophile than pederastic.[21]

Already soon after the publication of Foucault's book on Greek sex, vase images had been identified as the most promising means to dismantle the 'Dover-Foucault' orthodoxy, with its preoccupation with power and penetration. Charles Hupperts, for instance, drew attention to a small number of archaic vases which contravene Dover's system of decorum by depicting same-sex couples of equal age engaged in intercourse. He concluded that in sixth-century BCE Athens 'pederasty wasn't the only form of homosexual practice' and that 'other forms of sexual practice than the intercrural act were practised'.[22] Keith DeVries was the first of a number of scholars to point out that some vase-paintings violated the norm by showing *erōmenoi* responding to the advances of their suitors. He also noted that the conventional wrist-grasping gesture was not only ineffectual as a defensive measure (after all, it leaves the genitals exposed to the suitor's other hand); it could in fact denote the opposite – an invitation to engage in intimacy.[23]

Even the briefest review of scholarship reveals a recurring modus operandi in enlisting vase images for arguments about sex. In essence, almost any given view on the limiting norms of Greek sexual practice established through vase-paintings can be countered with another selection of examples that seems to demonstrate the existence of a practice previously considered inadmissible. If the accepted view states that same-sex relations had to be age-differential and had to protect the honour of the boy, sure enough the perusal of the vast store of Greek pottery held in museum collections will reveal images that contradict that assumed norm.

The search for unorthodox depictions of sex has given rise to proliferating archives of vase images devoted to the subject, in keeping with the model established by Dover. The latest instalments, by Andrew Lear and Holt Parker, comprise up to 647 items assiduously collected to intimate what Greek pederasty was really like.[24] However large this corpus might seem, we should note at the outset that it represents a small fraction of the Athenian painted pottery currently recorded, numbering well in the six-digit range. While it has become obligatory to stress that vase images cannot be taken for 'snapshots' of what went on in ancient life, when scholarship on ancient sex gets down to converting vase-paintings into

historical description we find ourselves more often than not in an oppositional debate where one image has to be judged more realistic than another or one set of images more representative. Images that do not fit one's model are dismissed as 'fantasy' and irrelevant to the social historian. Although they tend to disagree on what the images tell us about ancient sexual practices, the different parties take for granted that the relationship between representation and the 'truth' of visible sex is what matters most about this material. If such factors as symbolism, allusion and idealization are at all acknowledged, they are usually treated as distorting filters that have to be neutralized rather than studied in their own right.

In Hubbard's work this content-focused approach to images has generated a historical account of Athenian pederasty which resolves the ostensible inconsistencies of the visual evidence by subsuming it into a master narrative of progressive democratization. In this account the disparity between the self-assured hedonism of earlier vase-paintings (normally dated between 560 and 470 BCE) and the apprehensions about pederasty in the later Greek texts reflects the marginalization of traditional elite practices under the homogenizing impetus of radical democracy in the fifth century BCE. The outward marks of privilege were viewed with such mistrust by the newly empowered populace that wariness about traditional boy love was apparently internalized, inhibiting its practice even in elite circles. Hubbard goes as far as to compare Plato's idealization of chaste pederasty (the proverbial Platonic love) with the claims of 'assimilationist' gay-rights leaders 'sell[ing] out their brothers (and in many cases their own repressed desires) by creating the public fiction that most gays are involved in long-term monogamous age- and class-equal relationships'.[25]

The marginalization of materiality in the debates on ancient sex has created a situation in which vase images can be adduced without any theoretical consideration – either making speculative claims about the relationship between the representation and reality of sex in ancient Athens or developing equally unverifiable historical hypotheses to explain the disparities that are apparent both within and between different genres of textual and pictorial representation. Either way, the vase images are reduced to their supposed mimetic content, while the ceramic objects on which they appear are disregarded. If the objects' context of consumption is mentioned at all the reader is offered at best a perfunctory synopsis of what the ancient sources say about the characteristic customs and conversation topics of Greek drinking parties.

Foucault's silence in *History of Sexuality* on the vases marks a missed opportunity, for any consideration of the cultural work which the objects accomplished in the construction of sexual morals goes to the heart not only of the current debate on pederasty but the material

ramifications of discourse more broadly. Such consideration would have required Foucault to detail, with greater clarity than he probably ever did, what matter is and what part it plays in the construction of the self as a desiring subject.

Current scholarship on Greek vases tends to presume that what we see in the sex scenes is, however indirectly, a reflection of what the Greeks could see around themselves. If the question is raised of how they reacted to what the images depict, the discussion usually invokes circumstantial evidence from the broader repertoire of vase-painting or from the textual tradition in order to decide whether a depicted practice was evaluated in a positive or negative way. For the purpose of illustration we can refer to the disagreements about the interpretation of the Brygos cup in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Fig. 4). The subject in the circular field in the centre of the cup's interior (known as the tondo) is bound to provoke strong reactions. But what exactly should that reaction be? Titillation, arousal, amusement or consternation? Until not so long ago, the Ashmolean Museum labelled the scene as showing 'paedophile and victim'.[26] In his contribution to *Greek Love Reconsidered*, conversely, Alan Shapiro explains the scene as an evocative coming-of-age allegory:

> ... far from intimidated by the lavish display of potency, [the pubescent boy] slips one arm affectionately around the man's neck and enjoys the attention. The bag of knucklebones in the boy's other hand suggests the childhood games that he is about to leave behind; the sponge and strigil [a metal instrument to scrape sweat and dirt off the skin after physical exercise] behind the man, the world of the wrestling school he is about to enter; and the walking stick beside these, the world of the Athenian adult male citizen still to come after that. Here, on the cusp of adolescence, he is initiated into the world of sexual pleasure, perhaps not yet his own, but full of excitement and the anticipation of becoming a man himself.[27]

Is the *erastēs* in the scene just a devoted practitioner of boy love or has he possibly forsaken his dignity, literally stooping down to attract the attention of a social inferior, all for the sake of carnal pleasure? Is the boy's behaviour compatible with the pederastic ideal or is his enthusiasm perhaps commercially motivated? Many iconographical arguments can be brought to bear, none of them conclusive. There is nothing inherently pejorative about the man's physiognomy, although his hairy and slightly saggy chest might be taken to signify that he is rather too old for what he is doing. The erection he sports may be seen to approximate him to the image of the satyr, a creature denoting insatiable and profoundly

uncivic appetites elsewhere in Athenian vase-painting. The bag on the boy's shoulder is no doubt one of those gifts which pederastic couples can be seen to be exchanging in courtship scenes. But if it contained gaming tokens, as is commonly suspected, did it not also bring to mind the money bags which men can be seen offering in other vase scenes to female prostitutes and, by implication, the delicate distinctions in transactional order that define different sorts of relationship?

It is worth pausing to stress what is at stake in the assumption that this or any other vase image was conceived to produce a definite response. In the pursuit of such interpretative accuracy, the modern scholar is forced to appeal to supporting evidence from other vase images or from texts whose relevance to any given instance of reception is impossible to assess. In modelling a symposiast's experience of a vase image on indirect evidence, we risk substituting for the variety of individual experience the strictures of iconographical categorization or of the discriminatory habits of Athenian male citizens transmitted in texts. Whether we accept the image in the Brygos cup as deviant or idealizing, by positing a single interpretation we place the source of sexual desire in the psychological interiority of the viewer and give the mind priority over the situational interaction between person and artefact. By the same token, the queer 'readings' of sympotic pottery in recent scholarship on pederasty end up establishing a new pederastic norm, a sexual type existing independently of its discursive materialization.

TIME AND THE MATERIALITY OF *ERŌS*

Ancient symposiasts could not have experienced the vase images in as clear-cut a fashion as much of the modern literature on Greek sex would have us believe. This statement holds true in respect to how painted pottery was perceived both in collective assemblages and in a single vessel.

The archives of vase-paintings which scholars of ancient sexuality have gathered present a case of false empiricism, for they mix images from different periods and use contexts to make generalizing claims about ancient experiences. It is easy to see how such archives can precondition interpretation. To revert to the Brygos cup, for example, whereas modern specialists on pederasty tend to examine this example alongside a wide range of others which they consider 'pederastic', the ancient symposiast would have come across it in a functionally related ensemble acquired as a table set. To judge from the few instances where such table sets have been recorded from Athenian archaeological sites, the different components seem to have been produced as matching pieces and sold *en bloc*.[28] In the case of

the Brygos cup, whose precise circumstances of discovery are unknown, it is very likely that vessels of this type were originally used alongside similar drinking cups from the same workshop, perhaps by the same painter. This expectation is also supported by the high degree of standardization attested in the shapes and decorations of the output of different Athenian workshops.

According to this train of thought, the tondo of the Brygos cup is more likely to have been paired with tondos by the same painter than with scenes of similar thematic content deriving from heterogeneous productions. In other words, Beazley's lists of vessels attributed to individual (and often anonymous) vase-painters on the basis of his connoisseurial method provide us with a much better impression than do the pederastic archives of the pictorial context in which the pieces were viewed. Beazley assigned ninety-three cups of comparable shape to the Brygos Painter, a prolific artisan of the early fifth century BCE named after the potter, who signed a number of his works.[29] In this oeuvre the Brygos cup joins company with, for instance, a cup once in Berlin showing Clytemnestra running towards a door with an axe in her hand (Fig. 5), probably to help her lover Aegisthus kill her philandering husband Agamemnon who has just returned from Troy. The ancient equivalent of the woman wielding a rolling pin, the jovial threat would not have been lost on the symposiast discovering this vignette inside his cup upon draining it. On other cups by the painter, vomiting revellers are a recurring subject. On one of his larger examples, the person drinking from the cup would have seen a scene of exuberant indulgence on its exterior (Fig. 6), then, inside it, one of over-indulgence – a slave boy picking vomit from the beard of a delirious symposiast (Fig. 7). Far from illustrating Athenian customs, one shared goal of these images was to question the masculine ideals of self-control and hegemony for comic effect, further complicating the idea that contemporary responses to sex scenes were in any way straightforward.

If ancient Athenians would not have experienced vase images in diachronic and thematic groupings comparable to those established by modern specialists, a similar discrepancy can be detected in the perception of individual vessels. Modern scholars are accustomed to studying Greek vases in two-dimensional reproductions, a practice going back to the early modern antiquarians. The drawings and prints which these pioneers of disciplinarity exchanged to complement their cabinets of curiosities played a vital role in the formation of scientific taxonomies. During the process of specialization, the visual aids underwent a corresponding process of rationalization in order to enable systematic comparison of specimens and artefacts across disparate collections. Stephanie Moser recently traced the supplanting in seventeenth-century antiquarian drawings of more naturalistic

modes of representation with increasingly selective ones, in which physical features were either stressed or omitted according to the formal logic of the emergent antiquarian classifications.[30] Although highly effective as a means of transferring concepts and visual skills, the scientific images also rendered methodological self-evaluation more difficult as the premises implicit in their construction were quickly taken for granted.

In the study of Greek pottery the progressive pictorial encoding culminated in the early nineteenth-century practice – still standard in books on vases with photographic plates – of publishing vase-paintings separately from the visual information on the vessels' shapes, as autonomous pictures (that is, framed and sometimes 'unrolled'). In a parallel development, vases in museums were from the mid nineteenth century displayed in glass-fronted cabinets or vitrines, a significant shift away from the presentation of such objects in earlier collections on furniture designed to invite manual as well as visual investigation. The changes in the media of dissemination and display can be seen to reflect the growing awareness of Greek vases as art objects rather than practical implements. Less obvious is how the changing visual mediation has in turn enabled their understanding as evidence of ancient sex.

By transforming them into objects amenable to disciplined inspection, archaeological reproductions mask the co-ordinated hand-eye movements necessary to explore the painted decoration on the different surfaces of the vessel's body. This effect also transpires from the photographs found in current publications. Such photographs often depict only one side or field of the vessel in a tightly cropped frame, and even that single aspect shows the pot in a way no living eye can see it. Even though they *seem* to provide exact records of what an object looks like at a specific moment in time, in actual fact they collate light effects with temporal duration that were devised to render the object surveyable at a glance by minimizing optical distortions, shadows and reflections. As a result, the viewer of the photograph is prevented from recognizing the connective links in the vessel's overall decoration – the compositional and symbolic relationships between the individual parts of the vase that reveal themselves quite naturally to the person using the original item. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the relationships within a vase's image repertoire – the elements applied to its front and back, its neck and body, its inside and outside – have only recently become the focus of special attention, revealing a complex range of techniques to develop structural oppositions and narrative progressions.[31]

For the study of Greek sexuality, the impact of visual mediation is relevant as the durational aspect of handling a painted vessel is erased in encounters with the material – literally, the time it takes to examine the separate elements of the decoration and make sense

of their interconnections. By eliding the time entailed in looking, these graphic aids have also reduced the moment of anticipation that marked the vase as a potential source of erotic imagination, as opposed to sexual representation.[32] In trying to understand how our experience of a pot maps onto its experience by others, we can trace how the images and ceramic forms collaborate with each other so as to condition our perspective on the object, but we cannot access the store of personal experiences and dispositions through which other viewers make sense of what they see.

If we concentrate on the placement as well as the thematic content of the vase images, we can see just how important a feature this temporal delay was for the enjoyment of sympotic pottery. This is demonstrated, for instance, by the broad shift in the popularity of erotic subjects from the courtship scenes described above to the so-called pursuit scenes, which came to predominate in the fifth century BCE. The central element of pursuit scenes is the interaction between the pursuer and the pursued. The pursuer is often shown rushing across the field, extending a hand to grasp the shoulder or arm of the pursued, who looks back at the pursuer, occasionally stretching out an arm towards them in a gesture of distress or (playful?) pleading. Less frequently the pursuer can be seen carrying off the pursued. The combination of figures engaged in pursuits attests to changing preferences, focusing first on heroes pursuing women (500–475 BCE), then gods pursuing mortals (475–425 BCE), and finally youths pursuing women (450–425 BCE).[33] The erotic nature of the pursuit is inferred from iconographical attributes that identify heroic or mythological couples, such as Ajax and Kassandra, Peleus and Thetis, or Zeus and Ganymede.[34]

The shift in compositional type also marks a shift in the sexual dynamics, from the mostly homosexual courtship to the mostly heterosexual pursuit. Pederastic pursuits are a rare phenomenon – coinciding with the latest courtship scenes of Beazley's Types A and C, and normally showing mythological pairs, such as Zeus and Ganymede or Eros and an unidentifiable boy.[35] Since both types can involve erotic exchanges between men and boys, studies of sexuality more often than not view them from the same content-based perspective, in spite of the differences in internal construction and their implications for the viewer of the vessel.

On vases bearing courtship scenes, the relationships among the figured scenes on the different parts of the vessel are relatively limited in range. Often the front and back of the object (be it a drinking cup or a larger vessel for carrying or pouring liquids) repeat a scene with only slight modification (comparable to a pair of images in a 'spot-the-difference' game) to indicate two possible outcomes of an event or situation, with contrasting ethical

implications.[36] Less frequently do the scenes stress a temporal connection, such as progression or synchronicity. In pursuit scenes, by contrast, the figures on the different fields of the vessel are increasingly set in the same time-space continuum. As a result, their actions and characterization stand more clearly in relationships of cause and effect, and the viewer is called upon to explore the given relationship by handling the vessel.

On closer examination it becomes apparent that many pursuit scenes employ these denser relationships between the figures to explode the simple binary of dominant and dominated. They accomplish this feat by placing the paired figures further away from each other and, simultaneously, relating them more determinedly in pose, gesture and thematic content. The result is the early classical red-figure vases with isolated figures on opposing sides of the vessel's body, seemingly spotlit against a plain black background. One could say that the growing actual distance between the figures on the pot is proportionately inverse to the shrinking virtual space implied by the painted decoration. The larger distance between the figures allows the vessel to raise viewers' expectations as hands and gaze work their way around its body. This temporal deferral encourages the viewer to complete the visual narrative and, in so doing, to transgress the boundaries between representation and imagination.

In an important recent article, Nikolaus Dietrich showed how vase-painters began to take advantage of the temporal compression of the represented space, engaging the viewer's anticipations by inserting intentional lacunae or subversive choices in the figure cast.[37] Seeing a Zeus on one side of an amphora in the conventional stance of the giant-slayer (Fig. 9), the viewer accustomed to viewing Athenian mythological imagery might expect to find a giant on the other side, bringing to mind the traditional subject of the Gigantomachy, the battle between the Olympian gods and the giants. To find out, he or she has to pick the vessel up and turn it round. A viewer who has seen other pursuit scenes might be only mildly surprised (and amused?) to find the pursuit to be amorous, directed towards the woman on the other side (Fig. 8). But when a similar pursued woman is paired with Athena as pursuer, the vessel intentionally sets up its viewer's expectations, leaving him or her to complete for themselves the meaning of the scene.[38]

The ambiguity is magnified in pieces in which the pursued woman is paired with an immobile draped youth.[39] Is the fleeing woman still necessarily pursued or is she pursuing? And what if the decoration of the vessel consists of only one figure? Is the isolated young hunter who stops to look back becoming aware of a quarry to be pursued or of an amorous pursuer chasing him (Fig. 10)? Should we expect a male pursuer or indeed a female one, as in

the cup fragment by the same painter showing the same hunter with a hand (of Eos?) on his shoulder?[40] Or is the person pouring perfumed oil from the vessel herself to become the pursuer?

To return with one last example to the legacy of Greek vase-painting in modern theories of sex, for Dover and his readers the Ganymede on one side of a well-known bell-krater by the Berlin Painter (Fig. 11) was always going to be part of a corpus of pederastic images in which the boy is courted or pursued – in this example, by Zeus shown on the reverse of the vessel. Whether contemporary Athenians wanted to see more in this image than a beautiful boy playing with a cock was, as I hold, essentially left for her or him to decide during the process of viewing.[41] Unlike the disciplined viewer, prejudiced by scholarly collections of texts and images, the ancient viewer was after all, aware of many similar pots on which the figure on the front was not paired with a pursuer on the back – pots which for obvious reason have not been included in the pederastic corpus.

The aim of this survey of examples has been to demonstrate what painted pottery reasonably can be expected to contribute to modern discussions about sex. Even the restricted selection here shows how consumers of Greek pottery were prompted to contribute to the process of viewing in the form of anticipative projection, often erotic in nature. The pictorial strategies by which vase-painters engage the viewer's interest are in essence what this material holds up for systematic study, in courtship scenes as much as any other compositional type. What this material cannot reveal, on the other hand, is the limiting norms of sexual experience – which acts were considered permissible or noble and which ones not. Scholars who try to recover such experiences rely on strategic samples of ancient texts and images that allow them to formulate internally coherent statements about sexual behaviour. Since the sampling of visual evidence more often than not proceeds from criteria that are implicit and content-focused, as opposed to explicitly formal or contextual, the traditional procedure risks substituting the prescriptive norms expressed in Athenian legal and philosophical texts for the much broader scope of desires which painted pottery is likely to have supported.[42] To state that responses to images are variable and subjective is not to say that any interpretation is as good as another: on the contrary, the study of how the forms and images of Greek vases cooperate in creating their own possibilities of understanding is as empirical as any encounter with antiquity could be.

CONCLUSION: GREEK LOVE AND THE LOVE OF ART

In this article I have tried to show that the study of Greek sexuality suffers in at least two important ways from a lack of attention to the materiality of its evidence. Since Dover's ground-breaking study, Greek vases have been used in a pre-emptive manner to corroborate arguments about ancient sexual mores that are external to the objects and their associated settings of sociality. The objects have been invoked to confirm historical claims with which they share only a tenuous heuristic relation. Though Foucault was by no means insensitive to the role of bodies in discourses of truth, his *History of Sexuality* provides a glaring example of how materiality tends to be side-lined or ignored in a bid to confirm theses formulated on the basis of text-derived priorities. It is worthwhile to recall Judith Butler's critique of his paradoxical conception of the body as both a site and precondition of discursive construction.[43] In her view, a site of construction cannot exist independently of the processes through which 'things' come into being as embodied social actors. The vases which Foucault ignored offer a demonstration of her argument about how bodies matter: not as a pre-existing site of inscription, but through a process of materialization that is reiterated and stabilized over time to produce the effects of boundary, fixity, and surfaces which we are accustomed to identify as matter. If Dover or Foucault had explored how the pictures and ceramic bodies of Greek vases gave rise to desiring human bodies, it would have been far more difficult for later specialists to re-script vase-paintings into normative interpretations, pederastic or otherwise. Likewise, they would have fostered forms of debate less gladiatorial than the field is currently accustomed to, debates in which the history of sexuality would be politically committed only as far as methodological consistency permits it to be.

The negligence towards materiality concerns not only the vases directly, but also – as I have argued – the instruments through which they have entered current debates, the two-dimensional reproductions in archives and printed publications. Visual reproductions have determined what the subject of debate is through their power to conceal the temporal dimension of human perception. They realize this power in the transaction that takes place between the scholar or institution commissioning the reproduction for a specific purpose and the draughtsperson (or photographer) engaging with the actual object. In this transaction the graphic specialist trades her creativity for payment and applies it to the task (often considered 'mechanical') of creating an image that suits the specific taxonomical demands of the patron.

Since early modern antiquarians began to collect and exchange depictions of Greek vases, those demands almost always resulted in the translation of multisensory and polyvalent objects into surveyable objects that permit unequivocal classifications and explanations. As a result, the labour time expended by the graphic specialist becomes not only the convenience

of the patron but also what Pierre Bourdieu described as the recognized attributes of 'cultural capital', namely tastes and faculties of judgement that seem to be naturally endowed and can be converted into occupational and other advantages, for instance through university degrees.[44] In the long run, the same reproductions also encouraged the false presumption, as I have tried to show, that history can be studied without reference to the bodies and objects performing the work of materialization whether those of the symposiast handling his drinking cup or of an artist turning that pot into a picture.

Caspar Meyer is Senior Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at Birkbeck, University of London. His field is in Greek art and its cross-cultural persistence and resurgence from antiquity to the present. His first monograph, *Greco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia* (Oxford, 2013), explores the receptions of classical visual culture in ancient Scythia and Romanov Russia and their afterlife in modern definitions of cultural identity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This article goes back to papers presented in 2013–14 in the lunchtime staff seminar at my department at Birkbeck and the *Classics in Extremis* series at the Department of Classics and Ancient History in Durham. I thank my hosts and discussants, especially Nora Goldschmidt and Edmund Richardson. The impetus to revise my ideas for publication arose from an invitation to contribute a paper to the History of Sexuality Seminar at the Institute of Historical Studies in London in 2016. I am particularly indebted to John Arnold and Sean Brady who read and commented on earlier drafts, and to Daniel Pick for encouragement. All remaining errors and misconceptions are of course my own.

1 For his statements on ethical and political maxims, see especially Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, New York, 1980, pp. 126–9, and Foucault, 'Polemics, Politics and Problematizations', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, London, 1997, pp. 111–9.

2 See for instance Derek Hook, 'Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History: Foucault and Discourse Analysis', *Theory and Psychology* 11: 4, 2001, pp. 521–47. On the place of his work on sexuality in these methodological transitions, see Mark Poster, 'Foucault and the Tyranny of Greece', in *Foucault: a Critical Reader*, Oxford, 1986, pp. 205–20.

3 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, ed. David Couzens Hoy, transl. Alan Sheridan, London, 1977. The inconsistencies in his statements about the bodily and material implications of discourse have been picked up especially by Judith Butler. She highlights the contradictions between his explicit objections to the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of interior, repressed drives, on the one hand, and, on the other, the passages where he seems to accept the body, in accordance with Nietzsche's notion of genealogy, as a pre-discursive site of resistance against the pressures of dominant culture. See Judith Butler, 'Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions', *Journal of Philosophy* 86: 11, 1989, pp. 601–7.

4 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, transl. Robert Hurley, London, 1985, p. 194, discussed in Kirk Ormand, 'Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and the Discipline of Classics', in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, ed. Thomas K. Hubbard, Chichester, 2014, pp. 60–1.

5 Recent reviews of the criticism which Foucault's work received in classics can be found in Ormand, 'Foucault's *History of Sexuality*', in *Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, ed. Hubbard, pp. 54–68; Marilyn B. Skinner, 'Feminist Theory', also in *Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, pp. 1–16. The two critical stances are clearly formulated in Amy Richlin, 'Foucault's History of Sexuality: a Useful Theory for Women?', in *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity*, ed. David H. J. Larmour, Paul Allen Miller and Charles Platter, Princeton, 1998, pp. 138–70; Poster, 'Foucault and the Tyranny of Greece', pp. 205–20; James Davidson, 'Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex', *Past and Present* 170: 1, 2001, pp. 3–51; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love: a Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*, London, 2007.

6 Paraphrase of Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, transl. Robert Hurley, London, 1978, p. 68.

7 See especially the work by James Davidson, discussed further below.

8 Davidson, 'Dover', pp. 3–51.

9 Michel Foucault, 'Des caresses d'hommes considérées comme un art', *Libération* 1, June 1982, p. 27.

10 For example Jeffrey Carnes's review of Davidson's *Greeks and Greek Love*, in *Iris*, fall 2011, pp. 8–9.

11 Davidson, 'Dover', p. 5.

12 Kenneth Dover, *Marginal Comment: a Memoir*, London, 1994, p. 115.

13 Dover discusses the problems presented by the sources succinctly in *Greek Homosexuality*, London, 1978, pp. 1–17. For a recent collection of translated texts with commentary, see James Robson, *Sex and Sexuality in Classical Athens*, Edinburgh, 2013, pp. 36–66.

14 Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 19–109. For more recent discussion of the text, see Nick Fisher, *Against Timarchus: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Oxford, 2001.

15 Aeschines, *Timarchus* 29, 108, 185, 188; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 34–9, 60, 67–8.

16 John D. Beazley, 'Some Attic Vases in the Cyprus Museum', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33, 1947, pp. 3–50.

17 Dover, *Marginal Comment*, p. 115. On Beazley and his work, see *Beazley and Oxford*, ed. Donna Kurtz, Oxford, 1985; Philippe Rouet, *Approaches to the Study of Attic Vases: Beazley and Pottier*, Oxford, 2001. The Beazley database can now be accessed through the internet on: http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk. The vases discussed in this article can be looked up by searching for the Beazley Archive reference number in the database.

18 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, pp. 187–203.

19 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, p. 39, with a perfunctory reference to Dover's introduction to the material in *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 4–9.

20 Foucault, 'Des caresses d'hommes', p. 27: 'Les peintures de vases sont infiniment plus explicites que les textes qui nous restent, fussent-ils de comédie. Mais en retour, beaucoup de scènes peintes seraient muettes (et le sont restées jusqu'ici) sans le recours au texte qui en dit la valeur amoureuse'.

21 Thomas K. Hubbard, 'Pederasty and Democracy: the Marginalization of a Social Practice', in *Greek Love Reconsidered*, ed. Hubbard, New York, 2000, pp. 5–7.

22 Charles Hupperts, 'Greek Love: Homosexuality or Pederasty? Greek Love in Black Figure Vase-Painting', in *Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Ancient Greek and Related Pottery*, ed. Jette Christiansen and Torben Melander, Copenhagen, 1988, pp. 264–5.

23 Keith DeVries, 'The "Frigid Eromenoi" and their Wooers Revisited: a Closer Look at Greek Homosexuality in Vase Painting', in *Queer Representations: Reading Lives, Reading Cultures*, ed. Martin B. Duberman, New York, 1997, pp. 14–24. The arguments have been discussed and expanded by Martin Kilmer, 'Painters and Pederasts: Ancient Art, Sexuality and Social History', in *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization, and*

the Ancient World, ed. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey, London, 1997, pp. 36–49; Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty: Boys were their Gods*, London, 2008; Lear, 'Ancient Pederasty: an Introduction', in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, pp. 102–27; Lear, 'Was Pederasty Problematized? A Diachronic View', in *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, ed. Mark Masterson, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and James Robson, London, 2015, pp. 115–36.

24 Lear and Cantarella, *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty*, p. xvii; Holt N. Parker, 'Vaseworld: Depiction and Description of Sex at Athens', in *Ancient Sex: New Essays*, ed. Ruby Blondell and Kirk Ormand, Columbus OH, 2015, pp. 106–26.

25 Hubbard, 'Pederasty and Democracy', p. 11. The historical explanation had previously been presented in Alan Shapiro, 'Courtship Scenes in Attic Vase-Painting', *American Journal of Archaeology* 85: 2, 1981, p. 142; Hubbard, 'Popular Perceptions of Elite Homosexuality in Classical Athens', *Arion* 6: 1, 1998, pp. 48–78. It was more recently elaborated in Hubbard, 'Athenian Pederasty and the Construction of Masculinity', in *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. John Arnold and Sean Brady, London, 2011, pp. 189–225; Lear, 'Ancient Pederasty', pp. 122–3; Lear, 'Was Pederasty Problematized?', pp. 127–30.

26 On the label, see William M. Percy, 'Vickers' Scandalous Caption and the Library of Congress', www.williamapercy.com/wiki/index.php?title=Vickers%27_Scandalous_Caption_and_the_Library_of_Congress (accessed August 2016).

27 Alan Shapiro, 'Leagros and Euphronios: Painting Pederasty in Athens', in *Greek Love Reconsidered*, ed. Hubbard, pp. 31–2.

28 An important recent publication on such sets is Kathleen M. Lynch, *The Symposium in Context: Pottery from a Late Archaic House near the Classical Athenian Agora*, Hesperia Supplement 46, Princeton, 2011. The hypothesis that most Athenian painted pottery was made for export to Etruria is now generally dismissed, except in relation to a few identifiable lines of production. For a recent rebuttal, see Kathryn Topper, *The Imagery of the Athenian Symposium*, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 11–12, 101–4.

29 John D. Beazley, *Attic-Red Figure Vase-Painters* (1942), 2nd edn, Oxford, 1963, p. 368. In the Beazley online database the corpus has grown to ninety-nine whole cups, and more than two hundred additional pieces are known from fragments.

30 Stephanie Moser, ‘Archaeological Visualisation: Early Artifact Illustration and the Birth of the Archaeological Image’, in *Archaeological Theory Today* (2001), ed. Ian Hodder, 2nd edn, Chichester, 2012, pp. 292–322; Moser, ‘Making Expert Knowledge through the Image: Connections between Antiquarian and Early Modern Scientific Illustration’, *Isis* 105: 1, 2014, pp. 58–99. On early modern scientific imaging more generally, see Bruno Latour, ‘Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together’, in *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, vol. 6, ed. Henrika Kuklick, Greenwich CT, 1986, pp. 1–40, and Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, New York, 2007.

31 See recently François Lissarrague, ‘Ways of Looking at Greek Vases’, in *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, ed. Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray, Chichester, 2015, pp. 237–47; and Lucy Shipley, *Experiencing Etruscan Pots: Ceramics, Bodies and Images in Etruria*, Oxford, 2015. Although not explicitly theoretical, this growing interest in the materiality of Greek art resonates with trends in prehistoric archaeology towards questions of phenomenology, embodiment and temporality, as presented, for instance, by Julian Thomas, in *Time, Culture and Identity: an Interpretive Archaeology*, London, 1996 and *Archaeology and Modernity*, London, 2004. See also *Thinking through the Body: Archaeologies of Corporeality*, ed. Yannis Hamilakis, Mark Pluciennik and Sarah Tarlow, New York and London, 2002, pp. 29–45; Gavin Lucas, *The Archaeology of Time*, London, 2005.

32 The point is well argued by Caroline Vout, *Sex on Show: Seeing the Erotic in Greece and Rome*, London, 2013, p. 14: ‘The value of imagination should not be underestimated, for it is imagination that enables an object to be “erotic” as opposed to simply sexual.’

33 Andrew Stewart, ‘Rape?’, in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder, Princeton, 1995, pp. 74, 86–8.

34 Since the direction of pursuer and pursued normally coincides with conventional hierarchies of gender and status in Athenian society, the scenes have been seen to reflect the ‘principle of male domination by the means of sex’: see Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, New York, 1985, p. 47. The fact that the only exceptions to this rule occur in the divine sphere – namely in the scenes of the goddess of dawn, Eos, chasing the princes Tithonos or Kephalos – has been argued to confirm the necessity of phallocentric hegemony among mortals: see Robin Osborne, ‘Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery’, in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 65–80. For more nuanced distinctions in the meanings of

different types of pursuit, see Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, 'Structural Differentiation of Pursuit Scenes', in *An Archaeology of Representation: Ancient Greek Vase-Painting and Contemporary Methodologies*, ed. Dimitrios Yatromanolakis, Athens, 2009, pp. 341–72.

35 Alan Shapiro, 'Eros in Love: Pederasty and Pornography in Greece', in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Amy Richlin, Oxford, 1992, p. 58; Lear and Cantarella, *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty*, pp. 145–6.

36 On the narratological potential of repetition in vase-painting, see Ann Steiner, *Reading Greek Vases*, Cambridge, 2007. In scholarship on sex it is customary to discuss only the side of the pot which suits one's argument.

37 Nikolaus Dietrich, 'Unvollständige Bilder im spätarchaischen und frühklassischen Athen', *Antike Kunst* 56, 2013, pp. 42–4.

38 Athenian red-figure neck-amphora attributed to the Berlin Painter, New York private collection; Beazley Archive no. 201885; Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, p. 202.77.

39 Athenian red-figure neck-amphora attributed to the Achilles Painter, St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, Inv. B1561, Beazley Archive no. 213829; Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, p. 988.8.

40 Fragment of an Attic red-figure skyphos attributed to the Pan Painter, Athens, National Museum, Inv. 2.469A; Beazley Archive no. 206388; Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, p. 559.144.

41 Well put by Dietrich, 'Unvollständige Bilder', pp. 49–50.

42 Textual critics have been more sensitive to the problem of implicit selection of source materials; see for example Page DuBois, *Out of Athens: the New Ancient Greeks*, Cambridge MA, 2010, p. 24: 'Foucault for example, in his *Use of Pleasure*, extracts passages from ancient Greek texts to derive a prescriptive message about *askesis*, when the works themselves, especially those of literary artists like Plato, allow for much more complex and ambiguous interpretation.'

43 See note 3 above and Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, New York and London, 1993, especially pp. xiv–xx.

44 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Three Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, New York, 1986, pp. 47–51.

ABSTRACT

Although Michel Foucault never mentions the objects explicitly, his work on ancient Greek sexuality depends in critical aspects on evidence from sex scenes on ancient Greek pottery. The significance of the images comes to the fore in his argument concerning the radical difference of the gender-blind ethics of desire in Greek antiquity from the gender-based norms of modernity. In the overarching narrative of his multi-volume genealogy of modern sexuality, the alterity of Greece underlines his broader contention about the discursive basis of sexual experience.

This article confronts the historiographical biases that led Foucault to disregard the material nature of his sources and explores the implications this silence spelled for his successors. Its argument evolves around the disciplinary instruments which scholars employ to contain three-dimensional objects within the bounds of verbal explanation. Two-dimensional copies, in particular, enable historians to isolate vase images from their contexts of consumption and redeploy them strategically to support unrelated arguments. The discussion first takes a critical look at the archives of vase images that made possible, or responded to, Foucault's synthesis, and then turns to the possibilities of interpretation which the sex scenes hold out once reunited with their ceramic bodies. Of special interest are the manual operations involved in experiencing the artefacts in convivial settings and the interdependencies of painted and potted forms that mark the objects as intentionally subversive and open-ended.

Despite its criticism, this essay is itself Foucauldian in its effort to cultivate critical historiography. Its goal is to perform a 'genealogy' of Foucault's genealogy, with a focus on the objects and practices which sustained the debate on Greek homosexuality as one of scholarship's foremost contributions to the liberationist projects of the twentieth century.